**NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY**

**ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET**

# Learner: Thomas E. Lambright, Jr. Assignment # 6

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| ELT7008-6 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hello Dr.Gatin,  This particular assignment gave me the opportunity to identify at least three challenges of collaborative activities with online courses. In addition, solutions were developed to meet these online challenges.    **Faculty Use Only**  <Faculty comments here>  <Faculty Name> <Grade Earned> <Writing Score> <Date Graded>  Collaborative Activities  Thomas E. Lambright, Jr.  Northcentral University    Online courses present several challenges to collaborative activities. In this assignment, I will address four challenges and potential solutions to online collaborative activities. One of the challenges is the participation of online learners. There are several problems which may prevent an online student from participating. In fact, it would be premature for a professor to expect that every student will be on task and ready to learn without first experiencing online communicating with the learner. Some of the participation challenges that students may face is a busy schedule that will not allow students to dedicate the allotted time for course success. To be more specific participation challenges can come in the form of a student taking too many online courses and not being able to devote the proper time to each. Also the learner may face a medical problem and need to take some time off in pursue of their educational goals (Palloff and Pratt, 2005). A third item and challenge to consider is the endorsement of “groupthink” (Palloff and Pratt, 2007). By definition “groupthink” *is- the practice of approaching problems or issues as matters that are best dealt with by consensus of a group rather than by individuals acting independently; conformity* . This definition was taken from [www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com). When this concept occurs it can stop the creative flow of the group. The problem occurs when one member feels pressured into doing something he or she opposes. This individual may either remind silent, tune out and drop out from the program, or become very vocal, and complain to the professors or dean of schools. A fourth challenge is the technology proficiency challenge. It is important that the learner has the type of updated software and hardware needed to complete the course effectively.  At this time an analyses of each challenge to online learning will take place. In addition, a solution will also be offered to each challenge. Due to the environment of online learning, such as the lack of face-to-face contact, strategies for helping learners overcome obstacles to their learning process must be provided (Pozzi & Persico, 2011).  The first challenge is the learner who may take on too hectic a schedule without a time management system. In an effort to reach various goals a student many not anticipate the amount of time needed to be dedicated to successfully complete a particular course. This maybe a time management issue that can be addressed before the pattern of lack of participation develops. Research reveals that there is a certain amount of time needed to dedicate to learning the needed technology to accomplish proficiency (Kop, 2011). For example, the syllabus of Northcentral University provides an outline of the course as well as the suggested text materials. A learner needs to take into account the time needed to devote to reading and studying the materials. An outline can also be provided by the University discussing in advance the time commitment which is required to put in each assignment to meet with success. The solution can be as simple as providing a syllabus of expectations to the learner prior to taking the class. In this way, there is a clear understanding of the commitment involved to be successful with the online course. A dedicated instructor will take the matter further by making sure that there is a discussion thread which will need to be answered on a weekly base. If the teacher observes that there is no response from the online learner for the entire week than the professor can simply send an e-mail in response to this lack of participation. Another solution from the student point of view is to send an e-mail which can provide insight on how to study or prepare for a course (Bender, 2003). From the perspectives of the students, there can be more information on strategies that the learner can apply on how to best utilize ones time in preparation of online courses. From the perspectives of the instructor, a professor can create a project that a group of students can work on. In this way, students are able to help one another. As students work together as a team their efforts are multiplied. Each student will be able to play an important role in the group to get the project complete. This type of assignment can benefit the learner because the weight of the quantity of the assignment is more evenly distributed among the team of learners. In this way, the learners can focus on completing their smaller part of the assignment. In contrast, individual assignments require the learners to complete every aspect of the assignment. The advantage of a professor selecting the team building approach is that it provides an opportunity for learners to not feel isolated and overly burdened but part of a contributing whole. Research shows that it is important to motivate learners to make progress. This motivation at times may take the form of differentiated instructions (Smith & Throne, 2009).  With regards to the student who develops a medical problem during the course and needs some time off to heal, a clear solution can be to have the learner contact the academic advisor of the school to identify ways to come up with a reasonable solution. A solution can be to review the school policy on the submission of assignments. A question that may need to be answered is: “Is there any time after the completion of the course date that late materials can be submitted and counted towards that course?” If the answer to this question is affirmative than a learner may not have to possibly withdraw from the class. Not all medical problems are computer related. Carpal tunnel is a condition which is computer realted . Some physical problems may occur during the course. Online courses have advantages in some cases for the student who is disabled and not able to physically get to the classroom. An example maybe for a student who is not able to put pressure on his or her legs due to knee surgery. The student will be able to send an assignment electronically without needing to be physically in the building. In this way, the student can directly submit their assignment without the additional burden of putting the early pressure of walking on the healing knee. For example, I experience a physical ailment which prevented me from completing my assignments last summer I was taking medication and realized that I could not properly complete my assignments under the influence of the medication. I realized that I would fall behind if I did not complete the assignments. It was good to know that there was an anticipated plan of action which Northcentral University developed for situations in which a learner may not be able to complete the needed course. I contacted my academic adviser in order to determine my plan of action. By researching the Universities’ policy, I determined that there was a window of time, about a week, that allowed me to turn in the assignment that I fell behind in at a latter date. I was able to turn in the assignment without the penalty of withdrawing from the class or having to take the class over again.  A third challenge which was spoken of is “groupthink”. A possible solution to the “groupthink” concept is anticipating that this challenge could possibly occur among online learners. When group assignments are given out to the learners, the “groupthink” concept may develop. Therefore a prepared instructor will anticipate the next step, which is to identify student group leaders and provide them with training with regards to the dangers of “groupthink”. An additional solution can be to develop sensitivity towards learners who think differently than the group. The instructor must take on a leadership role yet be diplomatic with views, allowing differences of thought among the learners. My recommendation would be to provide training for the instructor with regards to sensitivity issues, freedom of speech as well as cultivating a spirit of collaboration. This concept of “groupthink” is further multiplied by the fact that online students are not able to see the reactions of their peers after they have typed and sent a message with their opinion (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Good leadership in this situation will anticipate this possible problem and solve it by providing a written statement of ground rules which will guide the learners so they present themselves in a professional manner.  A fourth challenge to collaborative online learners is an individual’s comfort level with technology. What is meant by this is that when working online one must become use to using software and hardware which the school provides. At times, due to expanding technology, updates in software and hardware are needed. If an individual feels uncomfortable with changing technology, a challenge can arise with regards to making progress with the online class. This may result in a challenge due to the school’s expectation of current updated software that the learner may not have access to. The school may expect that the learner has the most current software and hardware. This may not always be the case. For example, the learner may have a challenge accessing streaming videos due to narrow bandwidth with their present service provider. If this is the case the progress of the learner will be a lot slower compare to other online learning peers who have access to this updated technology. The solution can be to remember to test out the learning module demonstration lesson in order to get a feel of the school’s expectation as well as researched web-based instruction before taking the course (Brigham & Klein-Collins, 2011).    References  Ask. (2011). In Ask.com online information reference. Retrieved from http://www.ask.com/groupthink  Bender, T. (2003). *Discussion-based online teaching to enhance student learning: Theory, practice*  *and assessment.* Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.  Brigham, C., & Klein-Collins, R. (2011).Going online to make learning count. International Review of  Research in Open and Distance Learning, 12.1, 114. Retrieved from  [http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=122&sid=6e7465cd-2b18-456c-8e3b- 828ebe0886c%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=ehh&AN=59177111](http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=122&sid=6e7465cd-2b18-456c-8e3b-%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20828ebe0886c%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=ehh&AN=59177111)  Kop,R. (2011). The challenges to connectivist learning on open online networks: Learning experiences  during massive open online course. International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning,  12.3, 35. Retrieved from [http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=126&sid=04584fbe-46a5-401b-94d0- 24f32245e035%40sessionmgr113&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3Q](http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=126&sid=04584fbe-46a5-401b-94d0-%20%2024f32245e035%40sessionmgr113&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3Q)  Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (2005). *Collaborating online: Learning together in community.*  San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (2007). *Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for*  *the virtual classroom.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  Pozzi,F.,& Persico, D. (2011, April). RE: Techniques for fostering collaboration in online learning  communities [Online Reference & Research Book News]. Retrieved from <http://find.galegroup.com.proxy1.ncu.edu/gtx/infomark.do?action=interpret&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&type=retrieve&prodId=AONE&docId=A253494848&source=null&version=1.0&userGroupName=pres1571&finalAuth=true>  Smith, & Throne, S. (2009). *Differentiating instruction with technology in middle school*  *classrooms.* Washington, D.C.: ISTE. |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |